

## **PRELIMINARY OPTIONS FOR THE KIDSFIRST GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO ORAL HEALTH**

As part of the KidsFirst Initiative, Governor Doyle called for a task force to analyze and offer solutions to address the shortage of dental care professionals and children's access to dental care in Wisconsin. He directed his office to create the task force and to develop policy recommendations on the following issues.

### **Recommend strategies for educating an adequate number of dental health professionals if the state is not currently doing so.**

#### Possible actions

- Review whether there are adequate numbers of dentists and dental hygienists.
- Create and promote education programs about dental professions.
- Commit funding to increase spots for students in dental schools.
- Expand dentist's authority to delegate dentistry (WI Statutes Chapter 447.065).
- Remove regulatory barriers that limit dental hygienists ability to practice the full scope of dental hygiene and perform remediable procedures.
- Increase the dental hygiene scope of practice under 447.01(3) (g).
- Investigate certificate programs and articulation agreements for advanced degree completion programs that prepare for expanded dental hygiene practice.

### **Recommend strategies how communities and the state might better recruit and retain dental professionals throughout Wisconsin.**

#### Possible actions

- Determine what factors make dentists and dental hygienists return to their communities or to shortage areas after receiving dental education and create incentives based on findings.
- Work with dental and dental hygiene schools to develop residency programs for rural areas.
- Expand the scope of practice for dental hygienists possibly under 447.01 (3)(g).
- Explore loan forgiveness programs for dentists and dental hygienists willing to work in practices in shortage areas.
- Explore progress on removing regulatory burdens and simplifying the process for qualified dentists and dental hygienists from outside Wisconsin to obtain Wisconsin licensure.
- Develop programs with the Department of Commerce to help communities recruit dentists and other personnel into dental personnel shortage areas.
- Promote the Community Dental Health Certificate Program (Northeast Wisconsin Technical College)

### **Recommend strategies for how the state can improve access to dental care for children in Medicaid and BadgerCare.**

#### Possible actions

- Educate Medicaid clients about the dental system and the importance of preventive care
- Investigate the progress of loan forgiveness programs for dentists willing to care for patients with public insurance.
- Restructure or increase dental reimbursement rates.

Improving access to dental care for children in Medicaid and BadgerCare (continued)

- Determine whether further simplification of administrative tasks for dentists accepting Medicaid is necessary.
- Work with dental and dental hygiene schools to develop residency programs for education in treating low-income and disabled individuals.
- Promote clinical and public health training in dental schools.
- Authorize Medical Assistance reimbursement directly to dental hygienists for services in a public health setting.
- Explore progress on providing Medical Assistance reimbursement for fluoride varnish applications by physicians.

**Recommend ways to improve access for all children and to provide better oral health care.**

Possible actions

- Enhance Medicaid rate for dental care for those with disabilities.
- DHFS could contract with or hire professionals to provide dental care including prevention and treatment services to those with disabilities
- Expand dental sealant programs (Seal a Smile).
- Expand dental capacity at Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs).
- Expand community water fluoridation
- Expand fluoride supplement/rinse programs.
- Add oral health component to Health Check program.
- Work with Technical Colleges on expansion of dental programs, especially for low-income children.
- Reward providers who see a disproportionate share of Medicaid/BadgerCare, uninsured and underserved by finding creative funding mechanisms.
- Remove regulatory burdens that limit dental hygienists from performing procedures for which they are trained.
- Expand a dentist's ability to delegate under 447.065 their ability to delegate to unlicensed persons (Dental Assistants).
- Expand *SmileAbilities* training concept for special health care needs families.

**Recommend most effective ways to spend Medicaid dollars on preventive care.**

Possible actions

- Implement evidence based prevention programs in school-based clinics
- Expand school-based fluoride mouthrinse programs in non-fluoridated communities.
- Create school-based dental clinics for kids from kindergarten to sixth grade. (dental sealants and fluoride)
- Provide screening and fluoride varnish programs through Headstart.
- Strengthen data collection and maintenance to assure evidence-based practices.